

## Alumni Profile

### Alison Walker – Master of Urban and Regional Planning



#### Career

Please provide a brief overview of your career path since graduating from UCI.

*After graduating from UCI, I was hired full time from my internship at a private consulting firm, Kapstone. At Kapstone, I worked as a contract planner for the City of Irvine, performing residential and commercial plan checks, managing minor discretionary projects, and reviewing large apartment building projects. After Kapstone, I started my current role at the City of Laguna Niguel as an Assistant Planner. At the City, I work on conditional use permits, minor variances, and other development projects requiring discretionary review. I work with residents, business owners, and developers at the public counter and assist with a variety of projects, issues, and proposals. Each day is different and each project has its unique challenges, so there is never a dull day as a city planner. I am also on the board of the Orange County Young Planners Group, so I work with other new planners to organize events and activities to encourage our little Orange County planner community.*

How do you hope to make a difference?

*I love my job because I work with people who are shaping their own communities and neighborhoods. In my current role, I use my education and skills I gained at UCI to analyze new development projects, the effects of new businesses on an area, and the implementation of policy decisions. I hope to refine these skills and work with a range of people to accomplish their goals to improve their community. I want to make a difference through working on projects that foster social interaction and connection.*

#### Your Time at UCI

When did you attend UCI?

*I was in the Urban Studies and Social Ecology undergraduate program from Fall 2011 to Spring 2014, and I was in the MURP program from Fall 2014 to Spring 2016.*

What program were you in?

*During undergraduate, I was in the Urban Studies and Social Ecology programs. As a graduate student, I was in the Master of Urban and Regional Planning program.*

Why did you choose to come to UCI?

*I was interested in the unique Social Ecology major. As a high school student, I was involved with Model United Nations and I thought I would pursue a political science degree in college. When researching universities, I found Social Ecology and was fascinated with the potential of learning about how the environment and humans interact and influence each other. I wasn't sure what career path I would take, but I knew that I wanted to play a role in shaping social interactions and this could be an avenue to do so.*

### **Reflections**

What is your most memorable moment/experience at UCI?

*In graduate school, we spent much of our down time in the graduate student lounge playing board games, eating leftovers from various events, and spending time talking about our goals and hopes for the future. The friendships I made at UCI will last a lifetime, and I am so glad that I made an effort to get to know my cohort. My cohort was diverse in backgrounds and interests, but we shared our passion for community building and environmental stewardship.*

### **Alumni Life**

What advice do you have for a new graduate student?

*As a graduate student, make sure you take as many opportunities as you can to pursue a holistic education. Graduate school is so much more than the academics. Participate in your professors' or your own research projects. Take as many internships as you possibly can. Interview and ask questions to professionals in your field. Get involved with the student body organizations. Go to professional networking events. Attend discussions and lectures outside of your classes. Not only will these events and efforts help you meet others in your field, you will learn valuable lessons about what to expect*

*after graduate school and often these all include free food!*

What are your hobbies/passions outside of your work/research?

*I love traveling to different cities! Since graduating in 2016, I visited New York, Boston, New Orleans, Tokyo, Denver, Orlando, San Francisco, Nashville, Cape Cod, Vancouver, and I have plans to visit Seattle, Portland, and Germany in the next few months. I love seeing how other people live and learning about the history and culture to each place I go. One of my favorite things to do when I visit a new city is to take a bike tour! It's a great way to become familiar with the layout of the city, learn a little bit about the community, and meet other travelers.*